



Field Notes

Kerr Center for Sustainable Agriculture E-Newsletter

E-Field Notes

February 2022

Did the groundhog see its shadow where you are? With these recent wild swings in the weather, it can be hard to tell! Either way, this month we bring you news that we hope will help you plan your farming and ranching year.

David Redhage starts us off with a review of a new edition of a classic book on **heirloom vegetables**.

There's no shortage of informative sustainable livestock conferences, but the costs of attending can be discouraging. If that's your situation, you might look into a new source of **scholarships to help sustainable ranchers attend conferences**.

There's never been a better time to consider adding **blackeyed peas** as a cash or cover crop, with new research showing that, unlike many other crops, their **ability to supply nitrogen to the soil actually improved with domestication**.

Speaking of planting, Monarch Watch is once again offering **free milkweed seedlings** for schools and non-profit organizations, as well as larger-scale restoration projects.

Want to help the Kerr Center out of winter and into spring? [Make a donation!](#) [Thank you!](#)

In this issue:

- **President's Note: Book Review - Heirloom Vegetable Gardening**
- **Conference Scholarships for Livestock Farmers**
- **Blackeyed Peas Boost Beneficial Bacteria**
- **Free Milkweed Seedlings for Schools, Non-Profits, and Restoration Projects**
- **Late Winter Events: Women in Ag, Conservation Districts, Local Ag, Small Grains, Blue Thumb, Farmers Markets....**

President's Note: Book Review - *Heirloom Vegetable Gardening*

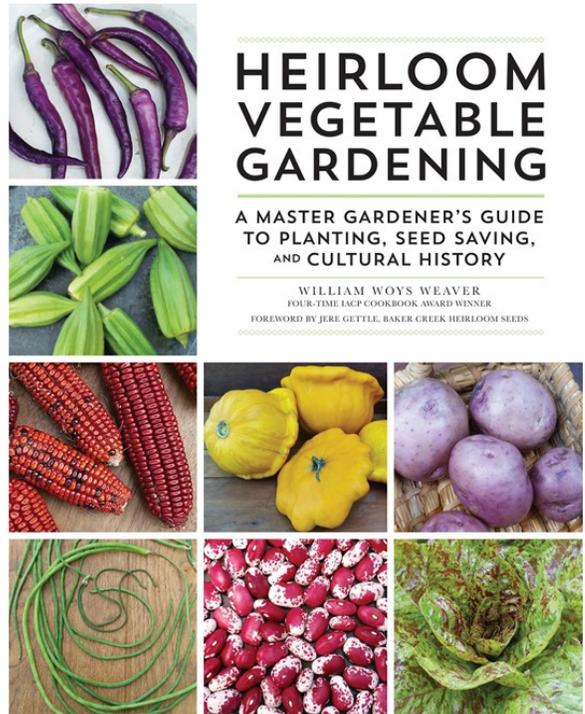
[*Heirloom Vegetable Gardening: A Master Gardener's Guide to Planting, Seed Saving, and Cultural History*](#). Weaver, William Woys. 2018. Voyageur Press. 480 p.

Several years ago I purchased a book entitled *Heirloom Vegetable Gardening*, by William Woys Weaver. The book was going out of print and in paperback. I read it so much my copy is dog eared. I didn't realize until recently that it had been reprinted (in 2018), with a new introduction, new content, and new photos.

The new edition is entitled *Heirloom Vegetable Gardening: A Master Gardener's Guide to Planting, Seed Saving, and Cultural History*. What I like about the book is that you can just open it and read about individual [heirloom garden vegetables](#). I didn't need to read the book from cover to cover in one sitting.

As the title indicates, the information includes a little about the cultural history of each vegetable. I have always enjoyed history, and enjoy the way the author writes about various heirloom varieties.

This is the perfect book for someone who is busy and doesn't have the time to read it cover to cover, but wants to sample small stories about various heirloom vegetables.



Conference Scholarships for Livestock Farmers

Food Animal Concerns Trust (FACT) is awarding [scholarships of up to \\$400 for livestock and poultry farmers](#) to attend conferences and other educational events — including virtual events — to learn knowledge, skills, and best practices related to humane animal management, business and farm finance, and/or value-added production processes.

Scholarships will be awarded on a first-come, first-served basis to eligible farmers until funding is depleted.

Current livestock and poultry farmers who reside in the U.S. and express an intention to learn about humane animal husbandry methods are eligible. Farmers must own or be employed by a farm that raises livestock (ruminants, swine) and/or poultry.

Specific conferences are listed online, or applicants can propose other events for consideration. The list of events is updated throughout the year.

For more information, visit the [FACT conference scholarship webpage](#).



Blackeyed Peas Boost Beneficial Bacteria

You might have eaten a helping of them for good luck on New Year's Day. Maybe you include them as a [cover crop in your rotation](#) - or even, like many farmers the world over, grow them as a staple food crop. But did you know that **blackeyed peas have the potential to sustainably supply even more of the nitrogen** needed to grow the world's crops?

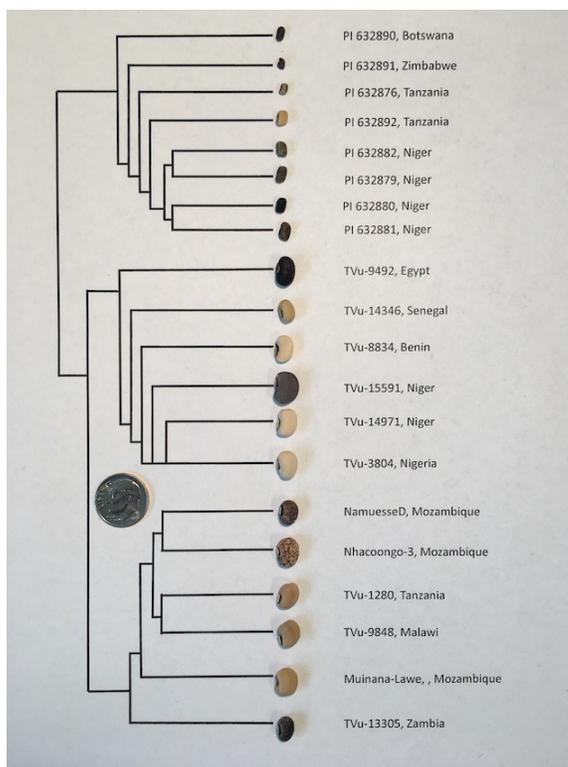
That's according to researchers at the University of California, in a [study](#) published last month. The research team ran a variety trial of blackeyed peas, focusing on early domesticated varieties and their wild relatives.

During crop domestication, and subsequent breeding of improved varieties, farmers and agronomists typically - and understandably - focus on aboveground traits. However, in many cases, including wheat and soybeans, that emphasis has allowed belowground features - like the roots' ability to form symbiotic relationships with beneficial bacteria - to atrophy.

The UC researchers wanted to know whether this same process has made domesticated varieties of cowpeas less effective, compared with their wild relatives, at forming symbiotic relationships with nitrogen-fixing bacteria in their roots.

Surprisingly, they found the opposite. **Domesticated varieties of cowpea, unlike soybeans, are actually more effective at setting up nitrogen factories in their root systems than their wild forbears.**

[Continue reading....](#)



Free Milkweed Seedlings for Schools, Non-Profits, and Restoration Projects

[Monarch Watch](#) is providing free [milkweed](#) seedlings to school and non-profit organizations, as well as in larger quantities for large-scale restoration projects.

For each qualifying school and non-profit, Monarch Watch supplies a single flat of 32 milkweed seedlings, thanks to funding from the Natural Resources Defense Council.

For large-scale restoration projects, the minimum award is four flats (three flats in California). Restoration project recipients must pay shipping costs, usually \$10-15 per flat (20-30 cents per plant). "Large-scale" is defined as a minimum of two acres, or one acre in California.

For more information and details on how to apply, visit one of the following links on the Monarch Watch website:

[Schools and Non-Profits](#)
[Restoration Projects](#)



Late Winter Events: Women in Ag, Conservation Districts, Local Ag, Small Grains, Blue Thumb, Farmers Markets....

Conferences continue! The **Kansas Statewide Women in Agriculture** conference is Feb. 26 (Corning, KS), the **Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts** is Feb. 27 (Edmond), the **Oklahoma Local Agriculture Summit** is Mar. 1-3 (Broken Arrow), a **small grains** conference is Mar. 1 (Lincoln, NE), and the **InTents Farmers Market Conference** is Mar. 7-9 (online/San Diego).

There's a workshop on **water efficient landscaping** Feb. 28 (Oklahoma City).

Blue Thumb is running a volunteer training in McAlester on March 5.

March 10 is the **deadline** to apply to USDA's **Farm & Food Worker Relief grant program**.

Full details on these and other sustainable agriculture learning opportunities, as always, can be found on the Kerr Center's online [events calendar](#).

Don't forget that you can also use our online calendar to **keep yourself and your friends up to date** on these and other upcoming events, including our tours:

- **Subscribe to our feed** and receive **updates to your personal calendar** as they are made.
- **Share events on the calendar** via a number of **different social media sites**, including Facebook, Twitter, and Pinterest.

The screenshot shows a calendar interface with the following events:

- FEB 26 Sat**: Kansas Statewide Women In Agriculture Conference @ Corning, KS (Feb 26 @ 8:30 am – 3:00 pm). Includes a 'Tickets' button.
- FEB 27 Sun**: Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts Annual State Meeting @ Edmond (Feb 27 – Mar 1 all-day).
- FEB 28 Mon**: Designing the Landscape for Water Efficiency @ Oklahoma City (Feb 28 @ 6:00 pm – 7:00 pm). Includes a 'Tickets' button.
- MAR 1 Tue**: Oklahoma Local Agriculture Summit @ Broken Arrow (Mar 1 – Mar 3 all-day).
- MAR 1**: Rotationally Raised: Making Small Grains Work Conference @ Lincoln, NE (Mar 1 all-day).
- MAR 5 Sat**: Blue Thumb Volunteer Training – McAlester @ McAlester (McAlester Expo Center) (Mar 5 @ 8:30 am – Mar 6 @ 4:30 pm). Includes a 'Tickets' button.
- MAR 7 Mon**: InTents Farmers Market Conference @ online / San Diego, CA (Mar 7 – Mar 9 all-day).
- MAR 10 Thu**: Farm and Food Worker Relief Grant Program (application deadline) (Mar 10 @ 10:59 pm).

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